

AUBURN BASKETBALL CENTENNIAL

By David House

The “new” game of Basketball came to Auburn as a varsity sport in 1906, some 15 years after James Naismith was given just 14 days to develop an “athletic distraction” for a group of rowdy students in New England who were training to become executive secretaries...

Down through the years, the “new” game has become the old game, and is now very much an integral part of Auburn’s athletic program and the intercollegiate sports scene on the Plains.

Nineteen men have had the honor and responsibility of coaching the Basketball Tigers and bringing honor and glory to the Plains. The most successful was Joel Eaves, a former Auburn player, who coached the basketball team while coaching ends on the football team. Mike Donahue, the Athletic Director, was Auburn’s first coach, and some of the South’s first great basketball games matched Auburn and Georgia Tech, Donahue against a former Auburn football coach, John Heisman, the man for whom the Heisman Trophy is named..

Auburn has called four different arenas home, and even played a few early games on an outdoor court. The student newspaper of the time described a “bloody encounter” in which the opponent “was trodden in the

dust beneath the mighty feet of the Auburnites...” and praised as “our lads with skinned knees and scratched faces, who have so faithfully defended the Orange and Blue...”

Auburn has been blessed to have many great and dedicated players. To name a few is to leave out many. It began with D. Whitten who scored the first points in a 27-7 win over Tulane in the first game and has continued for the next 99 years. Jelly Akin, Frank DuBose, Lefty Jordan, Jack Stewart, Rex Frederick, Porter Gilbert, Chuck Person, Charles Barkley, Mike Mitchell and John Mengelt- they are but a few. There are more, many, many more, each in his own way, contributing to the glory and grandeur of Auburn Basketball, each in his own way, making Auburn Basketball what it is today, and helping chart an even greater future in the years to come...

This is the story of Auburn Basketball, as it was, as it is, and as it is going to be.

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Auburn's First Gymnasium

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The First Game

Auburn defeated Tulane 27-7 on January 19, 1906 in the first varsity basketball game in Auburn history.

Here are excerpts from coverage by "The Orange and Blue," the student newspaper and forerunner of today's "Auburn Plainsman." The paper was careful to note that the game started at "8:15 sharp."

"Before a crowd of about 300 spectators, the Auburn Basketball team defeated Tulane at the gymnasium of (sic) Friday night, Jan. 19th by a score of 27-7 The Tulane team played a fast, snappy game and managed to hold our team to an even score in the first half. When the second half was about half over, it was plainly seen by all that the visitors were hopelessly beaten. Both teams were wild at times and had several good chances to score, but would fail to do so. Taking into consideration the amount of practice our team has had, they certainly did play a splendid game and did themselves proud, even to the very last substitute that was sent in.

"Tulane has a good team, and taking into consideration their long trip and about two games previously to this one on the same trip, they played far above the average of basketball teams. Even though if they had played Auburn the first game of the trip, the tale would in all probability, have been the same. Both teams played about even on fouls, Auburn making ten and Tulane making nine. Auburn converted two of her chances for goals from fouls into goals, while Tulane converted one of her chances into a goal..."

"...There was very little wrangling as to decisions which made it the more enjoyable to the spectators and the game was remarkably clean...For the comfortable visitors' seating gallery we are to thank Coach Donahue and Manager Hardie for their efforts and hard work in securing such a convenience. We also wish to thank the boys for their gentlemanly conduct toward the visiting team and for their orderly behavior during the game. Boys you should encourage these two points and not forget them in the future. We were glad to see many ladies among the spectators as well as our Honorable President Charles Thach..."

"...After the game the boys engaged in an old time stag dance, which was enjoyed immensely by all. The college orchestra furnished music during the game and dance which was itself, worth the price of admission..."

The first points in an Auburn basketball game were scored by Tulane's Holliday who scored "a goal from the field." DeWitt Gibson (D.) scored the first points in Auburn basketball history when he "broke the goose egg streak by throwing goal," (hitting a free throw). No reference to time of game was made.

Gibson's name is etched significantly in Auburn

Basketball history. He is credited with committing the first foul (kicking the ball), missing the first free throw ("thrown goal") and making the first free throw ("thrown goal"), all in that order during the first half of the game. R.Y. Ware made the first "field goal" and was the game's leading scorer with six field goals. Charles Williamson Woodruff (Charlie) had five.

No rebounding records are available for the first game. Rebounds were not a significant factor except when a team had the ball. In those days, after a made goal, thrown goal (free throw) or field goal, teams returned to center court for another jump ball. It was not until 1936 when the center jump after goals was eliminated that rebounding became an integral part of both offensive and defensive basketball.

Although Auburn was proud of its "new gymnasium," the ceiling apparently wasn't high enough. Early in the second half, a Tulane player threw a pass which struck an overhead light and shattered the glass fixture, causing play to be delayed for seven minutes. With thirty seconds remaining, another light was broken and the captains decided to call the game. The second half of the game would go down as one of the best halves in basketball in Auburn history: Tulane didn't score a point; Auburn scored 19.

The box score from the first game as it was kept in that day:

Tulane-c, Patton (capt.), Lee; rf, Holliday, Lee, Patton and Philips; lf, Frantz; rg, Wood; lg, Lorch

Auburn-c, Ware, Whitaker; rf, Woodruff, Moore; lf Gibson, Hall; rg, Jones (Capt); lg, Lacey, W.M. and Hardie.

Summary-Fouls: Ware 1, Jones 3, Lacy 1, Gibson 2, Hall 2, Whitaker 1, Wood 1, Lorch 1, Philips 1. Goals from fouls: Gibson 2, Frantz 1. Goals from field: Ware 6, Woodruff 5, Jones 1, Patton 1, Holliday 1, Frantz 1

Auburn subs-Whitaker, Moore, Hall, Hardie, Wilkinson, and Craker.

Tulane subs-Philips, Lee and Bradborn.

Officials-Umpire, Boyd; referee, Donahue; timekeeper, Guerry. Time of halves. 20 minutes.

Note that Donahue, head coach Mike Donahue, was the referee and "Boyd," most likely refers to the Tulane coach.

Such was the way it was at the birth of basketball at Auburn and other places.



AUBURN BASKETBALL CENTENNIAL

The Early Years

As with most early sports, basketball was brought to Auburn by Mike Donahue, who coached basketball, football, baseball and track while serving as "Physical Director," that day's equivalent to an Athletic Director.

For many years, Donahue, who came to Auburn from Yale in 1904, was Auburn's winningest basketball coach and the winningest football coach. It is fitting that Donahue Drive, named in his honor, runs by both the basketball arena and the football field. No man was more influential on the early days of athletics than Mike Donahue.

Basketball was being played as a club or intramural sport several years before it achieved varsity status. In those days, games were played on the fourth floor of "the college building" (Samford Hall) which was used for "physical training." Auburn Basketball's first official home as a varsity sport was a one-room gymnasium located behind Tichenor Hall. Built in 1896, it was more suited for gymnastics than basketball.

That first Auburn team went 5-1-1. The first game, the first home game and the first win came against Tulane on January 19, 1906, when Auburn defeated Tulane 27-7. The tie, the only tie in Auburn basketball history, came about when Auburn tied the Birmingham Athletic Club, 14-14, in the final game of the season.

From the Glomerata of that year: "We played well and at the end of the second half, in spite of the fact that our five men had battled against six, the score stood 14-14, and Capt. Jones very properly refused to submit to further sacrifice of our work to unfair decisions, and thus endeth the Chronicle of a season's work." And thus "starteth" the first recorded controversy about officiating of Auburn basketball games!!!

Auburn's traditional rivals in those early days were Georgia and Georgia Tech. Auburn first played Georgia Tech on February 17 in its first year of basketball, winning 26-6 in the first intercollegiate basketball game ever played in the City of Atlanta. The first game against Georgia came on March 2, 1908, with Auburn winning 34-20.

Auburn played its natural rival, and what was to become its biggest rival, Alabama, only once in the first 42 years of basketball. Auburn and Alabama did not compete in athletic endeavors in those days because of a disagreement that arose over per diem and the proposed size of travel parties for the 1908 Auburn-Alabama football game. Alabama won the first basketball game, 38-16, as part of the 1941 Southeastern Conference Tournament in Louisville, Ky. The two teams did not play on a regular basis until 1948-49 when athletic competition in all sports was resumed under pressure from the governor

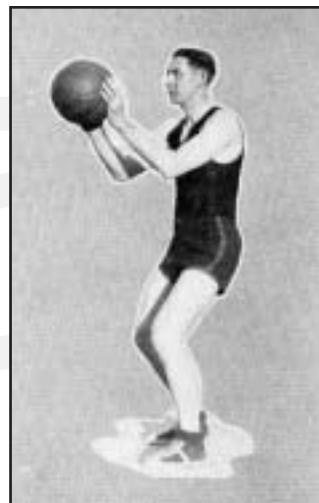
and the Alabama Legislature.

The 1928 team, led by Fob James, Sr., his brother, Louie James, Jelly Aiken and Frank Dubose, was probably Auburn's first great team. Coached by Mike Papke, it finished 20-2 and lost the Southern Conference championship game to Ole Miss 31-30 in Atlanta. Both of the two losses were to Ole Miss, both by one point.

"At that time Auburn was a basketball school," said Frank Dubose, a star of the '28 team. "The students, faculty, and community packed the old gym. It was an electric time in Auburn during that 1928 season."

Auburn has competed in three conferences in its 100 years of basketball, the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (S.I.A.A), 1906-20, the Southern Conference, forerunner to both the ACC and the SEC, 1921-32, and the Southeastern Conference, 1932 to the present.

The new sport of basketball caught on quickly with the Auburn Faithful. From the Glomerata, 1906, commenting on the first team: "The enthusiastic reception of this sport at Auburn is a notable feature of the new year. The fellows crowded in to the "gym" at every game and supported the team well, as they always do. The season of 1906 is past and we look forward to the next with the most sanguine expectations..."



Jelly Aiken

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The Golden Years

The mid-50s and early 60s are often referred to as the “Golden Years” of Auburn Basketball. From 1957-58 through 1962-63, Auburn won 106 games and lost only 28, a winning percentage of .791, still the most successful won-loss period in Auburn Basketball history.

How it happened and who made it happen make the story even more remarkable. Auburn seldom had a player over 6-6 in the miraculous run, and the best big man during the run was 6-foot-six Rex Frederick. Auburn's fortes during the glory years were speed, quickness, discipline, a motion offense, and tough, tenacious defense. One didn't have to be a tall or big player to play that kind of game.

Auburn's 1960 SEC Championship team (19-3, 12-2 SEC) was known as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, because of the snow white hair of coach Joel Eaves and small undersized players, dwarfs, who made up the Auburn team. Starters on the SEC Championship team of 1960 were G-Porter Gilbert (6-1), G-Ray Groover (6-1), F-Jimmy Fibbe (6-3), G-Henry Hart (6-1) and F-David Vaughn (6-3). Bayward McManus (G, 5-8) and Bill Ross (G, 6-0) were the first men off the bench and comprised the remaining members of the Seven Dwarfs. It was the most unlikely team ever to win an SEC Championship, but it was typical of Joel Eaves-coached Auburn teams in the Golden Era of Auburn Basketball.

Eaves, who specialized in defense when he played for the Ralph “Lefty” Jordan's Tigers in the late-30s, developed what became known as the Shuffle Offense, or Auburn Shuffle. It specialized in screens, motions and taking only layups or close in “can't-miss” shots. More than four decades after the Shuffle led Auburn to the 1960 championship, its field goal percentage is still a school record (.521 on 532 shots made out of 1022 attempted). Put another way, the 1960 SEC Champions took only 46 shots per game and made 24 of them.

The Auburn record for field goal percentage in a game was set by the 1961 team, .711 on 27 shots made out of 38 taken. That's hard to beat in any era, but it was especially hard to beat in the 50s and 60s when college basketball did not have a shot clock. Keep the ball until you had a shot you could make, make it, then play defense.

Auburn's best record during the Golden Era was 20-2 in 1958-59. The Tigers won 30 straight games and rose to No. 2 in the nation before losing to Kentucky and



1960 SEC Champions

Adolph Rupp in Lexington three games from the end of the season. The streak lasted from Jan. 22, 1958, an 80-52 win over Georgia Tech through February 16, 1959, and a 79-56 win over Tulane. The 1958 team won the last 11 games of its season; the 1959 team, the first 19 games of its season. Twenty-four of the 30-straight wins came against SEC competition, making the streak even more remarkable.

The 1958 team (16-6, 11-3 SEC) consisted of Rex Fredrick, Terry Chandler, Bill McGriff, Jimmy Lee, Bob Tucker, Bill Gregory and Shot Johnson. The 1959 team (20-2, 12-2 SEC) was made up of David Vaughan, Jimmy Fibbe, Rex Frederick, Jimmy Lee, Henry Hart and Porter Gilbert, virtually a whole new team, but the winning continued.

The Golden Era of Auburn Basketball was also the Golden Era of Auburn Athletics. In a four-year span between 1957-58 and 1960-61, Auburn won every major championship in the Southeastern Conference, football in 1957, baseball in 1958, basketball in 1960 and track in 1961. The War Eagle was ruling the roost!



Jimmy Fibbe

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The Glory Years

What might be called the Glory Years of Auburn Basketball began in 1984 with the first trip to the NCAA Tournament. Charles Barkley, "The Round Mound of Rebound" got the Tigers to that first NCAA tournament, but the early NCAA appearances were the stage of greatness for one of the greatest Tigers of them all, Chuck "The Rifleman" Person.

The Tigers went to the NCAA five straight years, reaching the Sweet 16 twice (1985 and 1986) and the Elite 8 once (1986). The eventual NCAA champion eliminated Auburn from the tournament twice, Louisville in 1986 and Indiana in 1987.

In 1985, Auburn became the first to win the SEC Tournament Championship by doing what was thought to be impossible—win four games in four days against some of the nation's toughest competition. Auburn defeated Ole Miss 68-60, LSU 58-55, Florida 43-42 and Alabama 53-49 in one of the most improbable tournament runs in SEC history. Had Auburn not won the SEC Tournament that year, there would have been no NCAA tournament.

In the NCAA, Auburn defeated Purdue, 59-58, and #13 Kansas, 66-64, at Notre Dame to reach the Sweet 16, where North Carolina prevailed, 62-56, in Birmingham.

The 1985 team consisted of Chuck Person, Chris Morris, Jeff Moore, Frank Ford, Gerald White, Carey Holland, Johnny Lynn, Darren Guest, Terrance Howard, Rodney Turner, Gary Godfrey, Vern Strickland and Howard Spencer.

The tournament run of 1986 in the NCAAs may have been even more amazing. Auburn defeated Arizona, 73-63 and #4 St. John's 81-65 to reach the Sweet 16 and then downed #11 UNLV 70-63 to reach the Elite Eight, before losing to Louisville, the eventual NCAA Champion, 84-76.

The 1986 Elite 8 team consisted of Chuck Person, Chris Morris, Jeff Moore, Gerald White, Frank Ford, Mike Jones, Terrance Howard, Melvin Haralson, Johnny Lynn, Rob Jones and Gary Godfrey.

Basketball is a team effort, but much of Auburn's success in the 1985 and 1986 tournaments is due to the outstanding and yeoman play of Person. He averaged 20 points per NCAA game in the two-year run and averaged playing 37 minutes. In the 1986 run to the Elite 8, Person played 37 minutes per game and averaged 24 points per game.

The 1987 and 1988 teams both reached the second round of the NCAA Tournament. All of the tournament teams of the 80s were coached by Sonny Smith. Smith who sees the 1986 team, led by Person and Chris Morris as "the team that kind of got it going for us."

"Everybody knew how good Chuck Person was," said Smith, years later, "but Chris Morris was one of the best players you never heard about. I thought the 1986 team was capable of winning the National Championship. It was a special team because they refused to lose. It was the most special team of that time."

The 1999 team may have been the best team in Auburn history, compiling a 29-4 record (most wins in a single season and most wins in state history), winning the SEC Championship and earning a No.1 seed in the NCAA Tournament. The Tigers won their first 17 games in a row, lost to Kentucky in Lexington, 72-62, then won nine out of the last 10 to finish the regular season 26-2 and rose as high as No. 2 in the nation. Auburn defeated Alabama three times in 1999, 73-58 in Tuscaloosa, 102-61 at Auburn, and 93-61 at the SEC Tournament in Atlanta.

Led by Chris Porter, Bryant Smith, Mamadou N'diaye, Scott Pohlman and Doc Robinson, Auburn defeated Winthrop 80-41 and Oklahoma State, 81-74 behind Scott Pohlman's 28 points, before falling to Ohio State, Scoonie Penn and Michael Redd, 72-64 in the South Regional at Knoxville in the Sweet 16.

Members of the 1999 team were Porter, Smith, N'diaye, Pohlman, Robinson, Reggie Sharp, Jay Heard, Daymeon Fishback, Mack McGadney, Abe Smith and Adrian Chilliest, David Hamilton, Corey Watkins, Charlton Barker and Adrian Person.

The 1999 and 2000 teams won 30-straight home games and set a record for consecutive victories in Beard-Eaves-Memorial Coliseum.

Auburn went to the second round of the NCAA in 2000 and made it back to the Sweet 16 again in 2003, defeating St. Joseph's, 65-63, in overtime and #8 and ACC Champion Wake Forest 68-62 before losing to National Champion Syracuse in Albany, N.Y. 79-78, before a sold-out raucous pro-Orangemen crowd.

Members of the 2003 team were Marquis Daniels, Marco Killingsworth, Kyle Davis, Derrick Bird, Lewis Monroe, Troy Gaines, Brandon Robinson, Nathan Watson, Chris Lollar, Rodney Tucker, Donny Calton, Jamaal Arnold, Danny Wicke and Johnathan Lewis.

Cliff Ellis coached the 1999, 2000 and 2003 NCAA Tournament teams and was the consensus National Coach of the Year when he coached Auburn to its best record in history (29-4, 14-2 SEC) and a No. 1 Seed in the NCAA Southeast Regional.



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Auburn Basketball Coaches

Nineteen men have had the honor and responsibility of coaching Auburn Basketball in its first 100 years.

Joel Eaves is Auburn's most successful coach, winning 213 games in his 14 seasons as head coach (1949-50 through 1962-63), a winning percentage of .681, also the best in Auburn history.



Mike Donahue

As with most early coaches, coaching the basketball team was one of many duties the head coach may have had. The first basketball coach, Mike Donahue, for whom Donahue Drive is named, coached basketball, football, baseball and track and also served as Physical Director (Athletic Director) and trainer. It is worthy of note that in 1906, the first year of Auburn Basketball, Auburn, coached by Mike Donahue, also the head football coach and Athletic Director, defeated Georgia Tech, coached by John Heisman, also the football coach and Athletic Director, 26-6 in Atlanta. Heisman had previously coached at Auburn and is the man for whom the Heisman football trophy is named.



Ralph Jordan

Another football coach, line coach at the time, but later head coach, Ralph Jordan was Auburn's winningest basketball coach as well as Auburn's winningest football coach. Jordan, a star center for the Tigers from 1930-32, won from 1933-34 through 1941-42 and in 1945-46 after World War II. As part of the tradition of Auburn Basketball, Jordan recruited Eaves as an end for the football team and coached him in basketball. Two decades later, Eaves, now head basketball coach and end coach for Jordan's football teams, surpassed his coach, mentor and boss as Auburn's winningest basketball coach in 1957, the same year Jordan's football team won the National Championship.

It was inevitable that tension arose within the coaching ranks between basketball and football. When coaches had responsibility in more than one sport—as most did—there was always a question as to which sport would take priority. That was especially true when a coach had

duties in both football and basketball as Eaves did. Inevitably the question would arise, when would one sport end and the other begin, and in the overlapping weeks, which sport should be the coach's primary concern.

In compiling the best record in Auburn Basketball history, Joel Eaves coached football in the afternoons and basketball at night for the first weeks of the season, making his record even more remarkable. He became Auburn's first full-time basketball coach his last year, 1962-63. He left the next year to become Athletic Director at Georgia and lead that program to some of its greatest years. One of his first acts was to hire a former Auburn basketball player, Vince Dooley, to be his head football coach. Such was the time.



Joel Eaves



Bob Davis

Dr. Bob Davis (1973-74/1977-78) rekindled Auburn's desire for championship hoops by recruiting some of the best players on the Plains, Mike Mitchell, Myles Patrick, Eddie Johnson, Pepto Bolden, and Stan Pietkiewicz among others. Dr. Bob, as he was called, never won a championship, but Auburn Basketball was never quite the same after he arrived.

In the post-Eaves era, the era of modern basketball, Cliff Ellis and Sonny Smith have been Auburn's most successful coaches. Ellis had 186 wins in his 10 years as coach, carrying the Tigers to the 1999 SEC Championship with a 29-4 overall record and 14-2 SEC record. The 1999 team achieved Auburn's first No. 1 Seed in the NCAA Tournament. In a two-year period (1998-2000), Ellis' teams won 53 games and lost 14. His teams went to the NCAA Tournament three times, reaching the Sweet 16 twice.

Sonny Smith coached the Tigers from 1978-79 through 1988-89, carrying Auburn to its greatest moments on the NCAA stage. He guided the Tigers to their



Sonny Smith

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first NCAA bid in 1984, and to the Sweet 16 two years in a row, 1985 and 1986. The Tigers reached the Elite Eight in Houston in 1986 before losing to eventual National Champion Louisville 84-76 in a game that was much closer than the final score indicates. In two of the five NCAA Tournament appearances, Smith's Tigers lost to the eventual national champion, Louisville in 1986 and Indiana in 1987. His 1988 team went to the second round of the NCAA, giving Auburn its most successful five-year run in NCAA history so far.



Cliff Ellis

Cliff Ellis led Auburn to its most successful season in history in 1999, going 29-4, winning the Southeastern Conference Championship, and earning a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament and advancing to the Sweet 16 before losing to Ohio State, a Final Four participant, 72-64. Ellis' 2003 team advanced to the Sweet 16 before losing to Syracuse, again the National Champion, 79-78

in Albany, N.Y. In his 11 years, Ellis took Auburn to post-season tournaments seven times in his 10 years as coach, the NCAA three times, the NIT four times.

Auburn enters its second century of basketball with Jeff Lebo, a North Carolina Tar Heel, at the helm. A tenacious and effective recruiter, an outstanding tactician, teacher and disciplinarian, Lebo and Auburn stand on the threshold of greatness as the second 100 years begin. For Auburn, and for Auburn Basketball, the best is yet to come and Jeff Lebo is leading the way.

From Sonny Smith, the architect of Auburn's most successful NCAA run in its first 100 years: "Jeff Lebo will take Auburn Basketball and put it in a situation where it is more consistently at a high level. Not only does he recruit, but he coaches...."



Jeff Lebo



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Basketball Arenas—The First 100 Years



The First Gymnasium

Auburn Basketball has had four home arenas in its first 100-years: The Gymnasium (1906-1916), Alumni Gym (1916-48), the Sports Arena (1948-69) and Memorial Coliseum, now Beard-Eaves-Memorial Coliseum, (1969 to Present). And, back in the early years, even an outdoor court.

The earliest days of basketball at Auburn took place on the fourth floor of the “College Building,” now known as Samford Hall, the main administration building. At the turn of the 20th century, the College Building was a multi-purpose facility, housing offices, classrooms and, on the fourth floor, “physical training.”

Auburn Basketball’s first official home, “The Gymnasium,” was an open one-room wooden building with doors and windows that was better suited for gymnastics than for basketball. Located behind Tichenor Hall, it was built in 1898 at a cost of \$1,848.

Though Auburn never officially played a game outdoors, the team had to practice outdoors while preparing for the 1916 season and the opening of Alumni Gym. The Glomerata notes: “At the beginning of the season, there was no court on which to practice. The old gymnasium had been torn down and the new one was not entirely completed. Finally an outdoor court was rigged up and practice begun. This outdoor playing was a big handicap for many of the players had never played on an outdoor court before... “

In its coverage of the 1916 LSU game, played outside before the completion of the new facility was available, the Orange and Blue vividly describes Auburn’s venture into outdoor basketball:

“On Thursday, Feb. 10, our Basket Ball (sic) team woke up and defeated LSU after a very bloody encounter. LSU, who had previously beaten Alabama was trodden in the dusts beneath the might feet of the Auburnites.

“A few days before this game, a visitor talking to one of the cadets had said, “I understand that Auburn boasts of a Basket Ball. “No, replied the student, “we never boast of it.: However after such an encounter as that o Thursday we may fairly swell up and burst with pride.

“Students came far and wide to view the game, some beating classes and others “iding Doe,” and it was worth the while to get a few demerits to see such good work. As we all must know he final score was 24 to 23 in favor of the best side—Auburn.

“The whole college may well give thanks to our lads with skinned knees and scratched faces who have so faithfully defended the Orange and Blue...”

Alumni Gym, paid for by donations from Auburn Alumni, served as the Tigers’ homecourt from 1916



Sports Arena

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through 1947. The gym, located where the Foy Union Building Cafeteria now stands, hosted its first game on Feb. 12, 1916, a 58-18 win over Montgomery YMCA. It was dedicated with a full house present six days later on February 22. The three-story brick building, which had a swimming pool in the basement, cost around \$60,000. The gym was upstairs and had a balcony surrounding it on the third floor. Students would sit in the balcony and hang their legs over the edge, rattling the backboard on occasion. Estimated capacity was 600.

Having a pool underneath the floor of Alumni Gym provided other homecourt advantages as well. Ralph "Lefty" Jordan, who played in Alumni Gym, and later became Auburn's winningest basketball coach while coaching there, describes one of them: "There was an area (on the court) about the size of a desk top that was dead. When the players dribbled over it, the ball would not come back. We beat Georgia 31-30 one night because of that dead spot. We would see



Alumni Gym

Beard-Eaves-Memorial Coliseum



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them driving toward the spot, and when the ball hit the spot, we would grab it and run...”

Alumni Gym also provided the funds for Auburn's first scholarship basketball player. “The first aid any Auburn basketball player ever received went to Shag Hawkins,” Jordan said. “We had a Coke machine near the coaches’ offices and we gave Shag all the money we made off that machine. It came to about \$15 a month...”

As colorful as Alumni Gym may have been, it gave way to an even more colorful tradition in 1948 when the Sports Arena was opened. An old World War II surplus airplane hanger, affectionately called “The Barn,” the Sports Arena officially held 2,500. However, many more would crowd into it for the big games, and in the days of the Sports Arena, the Golden Age of Auburn Basketball, virtually every game was big.

Students would line up for days to get one of the precious tickets to a game. For a big game, it was not uncommon to see students sitting on the exposed rafters above the court. There was no room around the court. Fans’ feet often marked the out-of-bounds line, and fans had to move to allow in-bound passes. It was that close. Benches were located at the ends of the court, virtually in the student sections, making it even more unbearable for opponents. Conditions such as this would no longer be allowed today, but in the 50s and 60s, the Sports Arena was home- sweet-home to Auburn Basketball.

Two of Auburn's biggest wins ever came in the Sports Arena in 1959 and 1960. In 1959 Mississippi State, led by Bailey Howell and coached by the legendary Babe McCarthy, finished the season ranked third in the nation with a 24-1 record. The lone loss came to Auburn in the Sports Arena, 97-66. In 1960, Auburn beat Kentucky, 61-60, on two Jimmy Fibbe free throws with four seconds

left and a horn-sounding block by John Helmlinger, to take over first place in the SEC, and position them for their first SEC Championship which they won a week later.

Memorial Coliseum, named in honor of those Auburn men and women who lost their lives in service to the country, opened on January 11, 1969, with a 90-71 win over LSU and Pistol Pete Maravich, the most prolific shooter and scorer of the 20th Century. Seating 12,500 when it opened, the Coliseum is a multi-purpose building costing \$6 million. It was renovated in 1998-99. Current seating capacity (2005-06) is 10,500.

Auburn has won almost 70 percent of its games in the Coliseum. Auburn's longest Coliseum winning streak is 30 games, from the start of the 1997-98 season to the final game of the 1999-2000 season.

The Coliseum was renamed Joel H. Eaves-Memorial Coliseum in 1987 to recognize the contribution of one of Auburn's all-time great players, and its most successful basketball coach. It became Beard-Eaves-Memorial Coliseum in 1993, honoring G.W. “Jeff” Beard, a former Auburn athlete, who worked in the Auburn Athletic Department for almost 40 years and served as Athletic Director from 1951-72. Under Beard's guidance, Auburn's athletic program had its greatest success in history at the time. Beard is considered to be the father of Auburn's modern athletic program.

With the Coliseum entering into its fourth decade of service, plans are underway to ensure that Auburn has the facilities it needs to compete as never before for basketball championships. Options regarding a new dedicated practice facility and a new arena are being explored and considered.



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AUBURN BASKETBALL CENTENNIAL

Great Players

Great Players can be defined in many different ways—great shooters, great scorers, great rebounders, great defensive players, great team players and great go-to players, players who can be depended on to get the job done at crucial times in crucial games.

Auburn has had them all. Here are but a few:

Frank Jones, Ebb James, Louie James, Fob James, Sr., Jelly Akin, Frank DuBose, Moon Mullins, Jack Stewart, Charles Barkley, Lee DeFore, Rex Frederick, Henry Hart, John Mengelt, Mike Mitchell, Chuck Person, Wesley Person, Chris Porter, Doc Robinson, Bobby Buisson and Jack Stewart, Auburn's first All-American in 1932....

Marquis Daniels, Frank Ford, Gerald White, Jimmy Fibbe, Layton Johns, Eddie Johnson, Chris Morris, Bill Alexander, Aaron Swinson, Jeff Moore, Stan Pietkiewicz, Scott Pohlman, Kyle Davis, Joe Newton, Pat Burke, Wally Tinker, Billy Tinker, Bill Kirkpatrick, Lefty Jordan, Joel Eaves and Shag Hawkins, Auburn's first scholarship player in the early 40s....

Porter Gilbert, Larry Chapman, Odell Mosteller, Bryant Smith, Reggie Sharp, Earl Banks, Ronnie Battle, Mike Jones, Frank Mancini, Bill Lynn, Mamadou N'diaye, Kennan Carpenter, Jim O'Donnell, Moochie Norris, Bobby Cattage and Henry Harris, Auburn's first African-American player in 1969....

Kyle Davis, Bubba Price, Franklin Williams, Wes Flanigan, Aubrey Wiley, Derrick Dennison, Gary Redding, Mike Christian, Pepto Bolden, Darrell Lockhart, Derrick Dennison, Al Leaphart, Inman "Coot" Veal, Bob Miller, Bill McGriff, Jim Retseck, Alex Howell, Daymeon Fishback, Reggie Gallon, Mack McGadney, Myles Patrick, John Caylor, Lance Weems, Henry Sturkie, Rich Valavicius and Don Lanford, who was the first All-SEC player in 1951...

Jimmy Lee, David Vaughn, Freddy Guy, Gary England, Tom Perry, Zane Arnold, Adam Harrington, Bill McGriff, Jamison Brewer, Vince Dooley, yes, Vince Dooley, John Helmlinger, whose blocked shot against Kentucky preserved the 1960 SEC Championship and Jim Martin, a center on the 1952 team who became 14th the President of Auburn University in 1984....

These and many more, many, many more.

In its first 100 years of Basketball, Auburn has had 11 All-America players, and 54 All-SEC players. Many players, many different kinds of players, with different skills, different attributes and different personalities, all blending together to give Auburn Basketball a proud past and a promising future.

And the best is yet to come...



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